



State Representative
Eric Pettigrew



State Representative
Sharon Tomiko Santos

Special Report on Education to the 37th District

Fall 2005



Dear friends and neighbors:

The 21st century continues to bring sweeping changes to our lives that will affect our children's future. Society is increasingly complex and the economy is ever more globalized and competitive. Our next generation of leaders will require advanced thinking and communication skills. This is why our students need – and deserve – every opportunity to achieve academic success.

Indeed, the most important responsibility of state government is to provide for the education of one million students enrolled in our public schools. In order to fulfill this mission, we must begin by understanding the unique academic needs of each student.

The students of the 37th District reflect the great diversity of our state. Our students include English language learners, children with learning disabilities, as well as honors students, all who require vastly different classroom instruction. The quality of education we provide these students today will largely determine their achievements of tomorrow. Our goal is to equip every student with the skills necessary to find a job or pursue higher education.

The upcoming 2006 Legislative Session will be a crucial time to improve the education system for all of our students. Please take a moment to read this newsletter and feel free to contact us with your questions or comments.

We look forward to hearing from you.



Eric Pettigrew
State Representative



Sharon Tomiko Santos
State Representative

Translations are available in Spanish and Chinese:

Si desea una versión resumida en español de este comunicado, por favor contáctenos.

想知道這份通訊的中文摘要，請聯絡我們。



Special Report on Education

The road to education reform

In 1992, Washington State initiated efforts to reform the public education system in response to concerns about students who were graduating without the basic skills necessary to succeed in college or in the workplace. Parents, educators, and business leaders worked together to identify what students should know in reading, writing, math, science, social studies, health and fitness, and the arts. From this process, *essential academic learning requirements* (EALRs) were developed for each of these subjects and for each grade level.

The specific skill sets and knowledge defined by the EALRs form the core of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). This assessment is based on the results of a written examination which students take in the fourth, seventh and tenth grades.

The WASL test results are released each year and give us – students, parents, educators, policymakers, and the public – the information we need to assess how well our students are learning and to evaluate how well the state is meeting its paramount duty “to make ample provision for the education of all students” as mandated by the Washington State Constitution.

Improving student learning

The success of more than a decade of education reform rests on our ability to answer this question: Have we improved student learning in Washington State?

Education reform measures focus on accountability, achievement and assessment. This special report details what is happening in these three areas to ensure that, in Washington State, every student achieves academic success.

Accountability

Accountability is a fundamental concept of governance. As we work to improve student learning across the

state, we must also demonstrate that every tax dollar is well spent toward achieving that goal.

Washington Learns

This year, the Legislature approved *Washington Learns*, a comprehensive 18 month study of the entire education system. State lawmakers, Governor Christine Gregoire, parents, and education advocates will examine how we fund education at all levels and what programs most effectively serve our students. The study will focus on three areas:

Early Education: Early learning gives children a head start in learning and provides a transition into K-12 education. Our goal is to create an early learning system that prepares every child to succeed in school.

K-12 Education: The aim of K-12 education is to prepare all students for the world of work or for higher education opportunities. Effective solutions are needed to eliminate the persistent academic achievement gap between different socio-economic and racial groups, to reduce the school dropout rate, and to deliver additional learning assistance to struggling students.

Higher education: Higher education institutions provide students with the advanced skills necessary to function in a highly-competitive, global society. Our challenge is to keep college affordable for all students.

You can follow the progress of Washington Learns by visiting www.washingtonlearns.wa.gov.

Achievement

Rigorous academic standards identify what students should learn and know upon graduation. Our education system faces many challenges that we must address to guarantee every student reaches his or her highest potential.

The Achievement Gap

In Washington State and throughout the United States, results of standardized tests show consistent differences



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in performance by race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. Native American, Hispanic, and African American students as well as recent immigrants and some subgroups of Asian and Pacific Islanders do not perform as well as their white peers on the WASL test or the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS).

This disparity is of particular concern since, beginning with the Class of 2008, all students must attain a level of “proficiency” in reading, writing, and math in order to graduate. Students who are not on track to graduate with their peers may decide to dropout of school, limiting their future career and life choices.

This so-called “achievement gap” must be eliminated and the state must step up to this challenge by providing adequate resources to help all children learn basic skills. One way we are helping students rise to high expectations is by driving more resources into the Learning Assistance Program (LAP) for schools with high concentrations of poverty. In the 2005-2007 operating budget, we provided an additional \$25 million for LAP to help pay for extended learning options such as longer school days, Saturday classes, and summer school. Another way to boost academic achievement for all students is to recognize and value the influence of culture on how students learn and communicate.

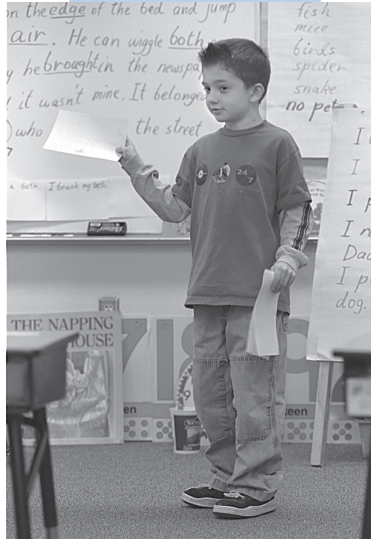
Cultural Competency

Students of color represent more than 25 percent of the population in our state’s K-12 schools, but fewer than 10 percent of our teachers and school administrators are persons of color. This disproportionate ratio can impact education standards, policies, practices, and attitudes.

What can be done to foster cultural competency?

- Create an environment that recognizes how culture, ethnicity and language affect student learning.
- Strengthen teaching instruction, approaches, evaluations and assessments to incorporate multicultural information across all school subjects.

- Recruit teachers, staff and mentors of color in our schools; and
- Increase family and community involvement in the learning process.



English Language Learners

In the Seattle Public Schools alone, immigrant and refugee students represent more than 70 countries and speak more than 90 languages and dialects. More than 10 percent of the student population in the Renton School District is enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, a figure that has steadily increased in the last three years. We are evaluating ESL funding levels to ensure that schools – such as Aki Kurose Middle School and Campbell Hill Elementary School - have adequate resources to equip their students with essential English language skills.

Special Education

Special education programs account for 8 percent of the total K-12 budget and serve more than 120,000 students. Although the Legislature increased special education funding by \$29 million in the 2005-2007 operating budget, this amount does not sufficiently keep pace with the mounting cost of maintaining these critical programs. The *Washington Learns* commission is expected to make recommendations about how to improve education funding overall, including spending for special education.

Dropout Prevention

The on-time graduation rate in our state is nearly 30 percent among all groups of students. Youth who drop out of school are more likely to enter our juvenile justice system and to face ongoing life and career challenges.

We have directed the Superintendent of Public Instruction to monitor school drop-out data and to develop a targeted drop-out prevention program that keeps at-risk students in school.

Special Report on Education



Assessment

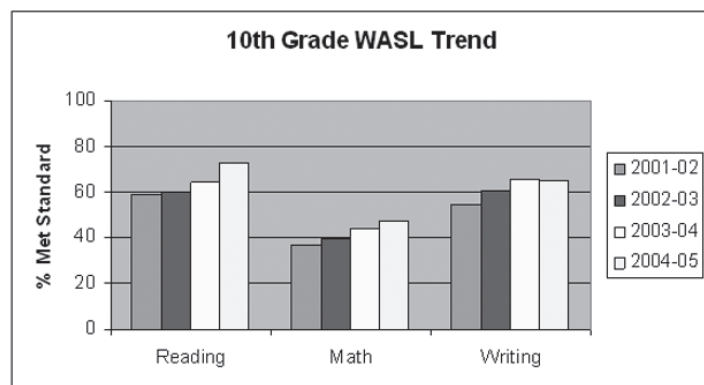
From the early days of education reform, the **Washington Assessment of Student Learning** was intended to be an evaluation tool to help assess the strengths and weaknesses of the education system. The federal No Child Left Behind Act, enacted in 2002, helped shift the purpose of the assessment from a systems improvement tool to a high-stakes test of student achievement. Beginning in 2008, students must pass all sections of the WASL test in order to graduate from high school.

The WASL test is unique and is designed to measure knowledge in reading, writing, and math. Starting in 2010, high school graduates will be required to pass a science component as well. The WASL test is composed of multiple choice, essay and problem-solving questions that require students to demonstrate their thinking and analytical skills.

This year, high school sophomores are the first students in our state who will be required to pass the WASL test in order to receive a high school diploma. In this report, we have listed resources available in our community to help students meet this new requirement.

How have students performed on the test?

During the past four years, student performance on the WASL test has improved. However, without significant continued improvement in individual test results, a sizeable number of students may not graduate with their class.



Visit <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us> for more information.



What if my child does not pass the WASL?

In recent years, the Legislature refined state policies to give students additional opportunities to demonstrate the ability to meet rigorous academic standards. These reforms include:

- **Retakes:** Students will have up to 4 opportunities to retake the WASL test before graduation.

Students only need to be retested on sections that they did not previously pass.

- **Alternative Tests:** An alternative test is currently under development. The test will be equal in rigor to the basic WASL test but will offer students another way to demonstrate mastery of essential skills and knowledge.
- **Remediation Programs:** Students can get extra help through tutoring, after-school programs, and summer school.

In 2006, the Legislature will approve an alternative approach to assess student learning. This alternative may include:

- Some combination of WASL test scores and grades;
- Specific scores in other tests used for placement in community colleges or college classes; and
- Achievement of industry-approved skill certificates in career and technical education classes.

How are English language learners and special education students affected by the WASL?

By state law, English language learners (ELL) who have been in the state for one year or less are not required to take the reading and writing sections of the WASL test. However, the federal No Child Left Behind Act requires these students to take the math section. Some special education students are exempt from taking the WASL test, but some must take the test with accommodations.

When do students take the WASL test and have opportunities for a retake?

The WASL is conducted each spring and, beginning in August 2006, high school students will have the first opportunity for retakes.

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What programs are available to help my child learn basic skills?

■ **The Learning Assistance Program**

The Learning Assistance Program (LAP) provides assistance to students who need additional help in school to get on track to graduate. Each school develops a unique site-specific LAP program to help students acquire basic academic skills. To learn more about the LAP program in your child's school, please call the school office.

■ **School District and Community Resources**

These school district and community contacts will help direct you to appropriate resources for your student.

Adie Simmons

Family Involvement and Community Partnerships

Seattle Public Schools

(206) 252-0992

amsimmons@seattleschools.org

www.seattleschools.org/area/fam/fpp.xml

- The Family Involvement and Community Partnerships office seeks to create equal and active partnerships between schools and families in order to eliminate disproportionality and ensure that all students succeed.

Barbara Salo

Learning Assistance Program, Title I

Seattle Public Schools

(206) 252-0192

bsalo@seattleschools.org

Lisa M. Taylor

Office for Community Learning

Seattle Public Schools

(206) 252-0990

lmTaylor@seattleschools.org

www.seattleschools.org/area/ocl/index.xml

- The Office for Community Learning provides support services that align and integrate the programs of extended school care providers, pre-schools and summer programs with school learning standards.



Communities In Schools of Renton

(425) 430-6656

www.ci.renton.wa.us/cisr/

- The Communities in Schools of Renton connects community resources with schools to help young people.

Randy Matheson

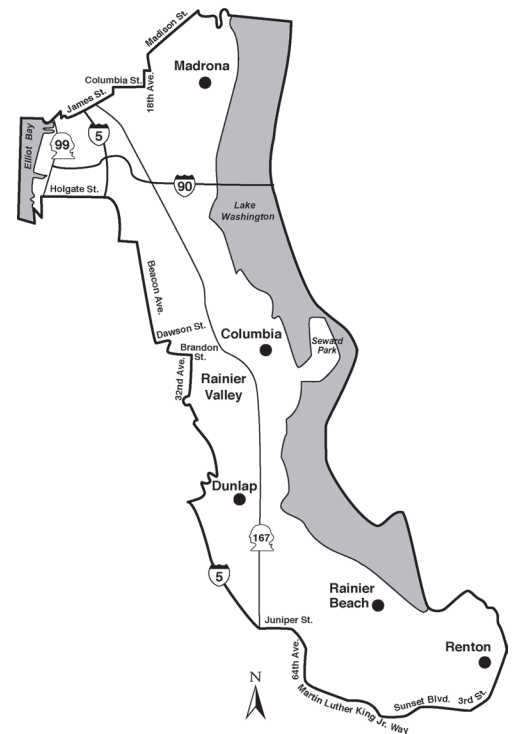
Community Relations Office

Renton Public Schools

(425) 204-2345

communityrelations@renton.wednet.edu

- The Community Relations Office helps connect parents and students with the school and community resources they need to succeed.



37th Legislative District



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- Financial Institutions & Insurance



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- Economic Development, Agriculture & Trade
(*Vice Chair*)
- Children & Family Services
- Housing

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